

issues; I am still in awe of the progress that has been made as the result of decades of work, diligence, sweat and tears of our country's civil rights trailblazers.

One century ago, today, Mrs. Parks was born in Tuskegee, Alabama. As many of you already know, on December 1, 1955 Mrs. Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a Montgomery city bus.

At that time in our nation's history as an African American woman in Montgomery, Alabama Mrs. Parks was actually risking her life by sitting in a seat that was denied to her because of the color of her skin. Although she knew she risked being beaten, insulted, bullied, and jailed that did not stop her from sitting down in order to stand up against injustice.

The arrest of Mrs. Parks led to the NAACP's boycott of the Montgomery, Alabama bus system. The boycott began on the first day of Mrs. Parks first court hearing on December 5, 1955, and did not end until December 20, 1956. It marks the first of many large-scale demonstrations against segregation.

For 381 consecutive days, men, women, and children stood up against injustice. In lieu of taking the bus, in many instances they elected to walk for miles to work, school, or for errands. Just for a moment envision that amount of dedication and commitment it takes in the hot days of a Alabama summer to opt to walk rather than take the bus for over a year.

Rose Parks by taking a seat was just the public spark needed to bring international attention to the civil rights movement and is in no small measure the genesis for the beginning of desegregation.

Again, because of the fearless actions of women and men, like Rosa Parks, the face of leadership in our nations is now more diverse than at any other point in our nation's history.

This change has been seen here within our own walls as well. Members of Congress are now a stew pot of races, ethnicities, cultures, sexual orientations, religions, and genders. This has only allowed us to have a diversity of perspective and has enabled us to better address the needs of our constituencies. Today, Congress in many ways reflects the America, what we represent.

The actions of Rosa Parks and thousands of other proud Americans and their supporters fueled the civil rights movement that advanced the principles upon which our nation was built. As I have stated before, although, we have come a long way we still have a long way to go. As we honor the life and legacy of Rosa Parks. As we reflect upon those who lost their lives standing up against injustice. As we celebrate what was almost unimaginable in 1955, the second inauguration of our nation's first African American President. We must also look again at our democracy and how in a time when we are making so many steps forward there is still an attempt to limit the votes of Americans. Given the progress that we have made as a result of the civil rights movement it is still incumbent upon each of us to continue to fight for the rights of all Americans. Recently, there have been systematic attempts to limit the rights of Americans to vote. Last year we celebrated the 47th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, amid efforts by certain states to erode the right of Americans.

Today, most Americans take the right to vote for granted. We assume, as citizens of

this fine Nation, that we can register to vote if we are over 18. Most of us learned in school that discrimination based on race, creed or national origin has been barred by the Constitution since the end of the Civil War. We celebrate moments like today, Rosa Parks birthday, that stands as a reminder of our Nation's honored and sometimes troubled past. Yet, at the time Rosa Parks sat down on that bus, the right to vote did not exist in practice for most African Americans. And, until 1975, most American citizens who were not proficient in English faced significant obstacles to voting, because they could not understand the ballot.

Even though the Indian Citizenship Act gave Native Americans the right to vote in 1924, state law determined who could actually vote, which effectively excluded many Native Americans from political participation for decades.

Asian Americans and Asian immigrants also have suffered systematic exclusion from the political process and it has taken a series of reforms, including repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943, and passage of amendments strengthening the Voting Rights Act three decades later, to fully extend the franchise to Asian Americans.

It was with this history in mind that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was designed to make the right to vote a reality for all Americans. And the Voting Rights Act has made giant strides toward that goal. Without exaggeration, it has been one of the most effective civil rights laws passed by Congress.

In 1964, there were only approximately 300 African-Americans in public office, including just three in Congress. Few, if any, black elected officials were elected anywhere in the South.

The Voting Rights Act has opened the political process for many of the approximately 6,000 Latino public officials that have been elected and appointed nationwide, including 263 at the State or Federal level, 27 of whom serve in Congress. And Native Americans, Asians and others who have historically encountered harsh barriers to full political participation also have benefited greatly.

We must not forget the importance of protecting this hard-earned right. I believe that the courage that Mrs. Parks displayed throughout her life helped shaped the United States. I believe that the courage she showed that day, changed our society. I believe that it is our duty to honor the Constitution and to honor the civil rights of all those who stand upon our shores. Today, as we celebrate the life of Rosa Parks, we must continue to push forward in ensuring that all those who have a right to a voice in our society have one. The right to vote is the great equalizer, one person—one vote. Yet, there are those who are attempting to impinge that right by requiring the use of Voter ID cards. Now these photo ID proposals have a forceful momentum that have not seen in years past, as part of broader legislative movements to limit access to the political process for disenfranchised groups at a level not seen since post-reconstruction era laws that implemented poll taxes and literacy tests. In just over the first two months of 2011, photo ID proposals were introduced in 32 states and passed out of one legislative chamber in twelve states. Lawmakers across the Nation have pinpointed photo ID as a top legislative priority. The Governor of Texas designated photo ID as a legislative emergency in order to allow it to be procedurally fast-tracked

through the legislature, photo ID proposals were pre-filed before legislative sessions began in half a dozen states, and secretaries of state in a number of states have listed photo ID as a top priority. I was pleased when the Department of Justice took action to stop that flowed piece of legislation.

Photo ID proposals have garnered significant momentum in more than a dozen states and opponents are having difficulty waging effective counterattacks to curb movement on these bills.

The time is now to stand up to protect the rights of the disenfranchised, the elderly, the disabled, and college student access to the right to vote. Now is the time, to remember the courage of those who participated in the bus boycott, recall their willingness to walk in the hot southern sun for over a year to stand up for their belief is justice, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Now is the time to truly honor the life of Rosa Parks, who by sitting down, stood up for justice. We must continue to move forward rather than backwards in this country. We must honor our past by standing up to protect every one's right to vote.

Today I remember Mrs. Parks for her courage and for everything she has done to advance civil rights movement. And to remember that although much progress has been made there remains much more to accomplish.

OUR UNCONSCIONABLE NATIONAL DEBT

HON. MIKE COFFMAN

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 6, 2013

Mr. COFFMAN. Mr. Speaker, on January 3, 2009, the day I took office, the national debt was \$10,627,961,295,930.67.

Today, it is \$16,480,910,656,603.96. We've added \$5,852,949,360,673.29 to our debt in 4 years. This is a \$5.8 trillion in debt our nation, our economy, and our children could have avoided with a Balanced Budget Amendment. We must stop this unconscionable accumulation of debt.

23RD ANNIVERSARY OF BLACK JANUARY

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 6, 2013

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate the 23rd anniversary of a tragic event in the history of the country of Azerbaijan.

On the night of January 19, 1990, Azerbaijan was invaded by thousands of Soviet troops. These troops entered Azerbaijan under the pretext of restoring public order, but with the true aim of ending peaceful demonstrations for independence.

Despite resistance to the Soviet troops by Azerbaijanis, more than 130 Azerbaijani people were killed and hundreds more were wounded or detained indefinitely. This episode came to be known as "Black January," a terrible event that only sharpened the desire for independence among the people of Azerbaijan.